

REMARKS

Summary of Amendments

With the above amendments, claims 1-13, 17, and 19-21 remain in the application. Claim 18 has been cancelled. Claims 1 and 17 have been amended to more distinctly claim embodiments of the invention. Claim 19 has been amended to depend on claim 17 instead of now cancelled claim 18. No new matter has been added.

Information Disclosure Statement

Referring to the information disclosure statement (IDS) returned with the last office action, three non-patent documents have not been initialed by the Examiner because copies and dates were not provided. It is respectfully submitted that copies of all references were provided when the IDS was filed. Nevertheless, a new information disclosure statement, with copies of listed references, is submitted herewith.

Regarding the dates of the references, the returned IDS shows October 1994 as the date for the "Operator's Handbook", and June 1996 as the date for the "Drawings & Schematics Manual." The "Various Engineering Drawings" do not have a date, but seems to have been created as early as October 1993.

The Examiner is invited to call the undersigned for any question regarding the new IDS submitted herewith.

Drawings

The INOVA XT™ 300mm wafer processing system mentioned in the specification (specification, page 4, lines 16-18) is not prior art to the present application within the meaning of 35 U.S.C. §102. Therefore, it is respectfully submitted that FIGS. 1A, 1B, and 2 do not have to be designated as prior art.

Claim Rejections -- 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 1 and 17 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being unpatentable over US 6,251,759 to Guo et al. ("Guo") in view of US 6,270,582 to Rivkin et al. ("Rivkin").

Claims 1 and 17 are patentable over the combination of Guo and Rivkin for at least reciting "a load-lock having only a single wafer support." Although Rivkin's title is "Single Wafer Load Lock Chamber...", Rivkin's load lock actually has and uses two wafer supports as stated in its abstract (Rivkin abstract, "The load lock chamber has wafer supports for two wafers,...") and specification (Rivkin specification, column 4, lines 29-34). Thus, Guo, Rivkin, or the combination of Guo and Rivkin does not disclose or suggest a load lock having only a single wafer support as recited in claims 1 and 17. And because references used in an obviousness rejection must disclose or suggest all limitations of a claim, it is respectfully submitted that claims 1 and 17 are patentable over Guo, Rivkin, or the combination of Guo and Rivkin.

It is to be noted that a single-wafer design is significantly different from a multi-wafer (e.g., two-wafer) design. For example, because Rivkin has to accommodate two wafer supports, the wafer supports do not include integral cooling (or heating) units and thus cannot directly cool a wafer. Instead, Rivkin has to employ a cooling unit that is external to the wafer supports.

Dependent claims 2-13 and 19-21 are also patentable over Guo, Rivkin, or the combination of Guo and Rivkin for at least the same reasons that claims 1 and 17 are patentable.

Conclusion

For at least the above reasons, it is respectfully submitted that claims 1-13, 17, and 19-21 are in condition for allowance. If the next communication is other than a Notice Of Allowance, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at (408)436-2112.

Docket No. 10001.000600 (NVLS 379)
Response To Office Action
03/10/2003

If for any reason an insufficient fee has been paid, the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge the insufficiency to Deposit Account No. 50-2427.

Respectfully yours,
Craig L. Stevens et al.

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